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ABSTRACT

This program, included in "Effective Reading Programs...," serves 1900 adults of all ages and several ethnic groups and nationalities. The students come from a large inner-city area and have educational levels below high school. The program was begun in 1965. An adult who wishes to enter the program first has an interview with one of the reading counselors, who attempts to identify the person's reason for coming to the program and to translate it into a specific educational goal. Counselors continue to give educational and vocational guidance throughout a student's participation in the program. After the initial counseling, the student meets with the instructor, who starts a folder in which all of the student's work is recorded. The student can then begin to work independently whenever he or she comes to the center, and the instructor can give help when needed. Those who read at a fourth-grade level or lower, work in small groups or individually with more teacher supervision. Instruction takes place in a "learning lab" setting, and a range of materials is available, from reading pacers for the more advanced students to language masters and primer-level books for beginning readers. (RB/AIR)

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INTRODUCTION

The adult typified in the concept of Adult Basic Education is the one who is "educationally disadvantaged," generally considered a functional illiterate. He may be economically poor. He may live in the inner city of Columbus in sub-standard housing as the head of the household of a large family, or he may move to Columbus from a poor, white Appalachian area. The typical adult learner is white, female, age 27 and married with two children.

The thrust of the Columbus Adult Basic Education Program is to assist this adult. The inability of an adult to function in society is due to limited educational skills that handicap the learner economically, socially, politically, and psychologically. The ABE program is not meant to duplicate basic elementary or secondary programs that exist in the public schools, but to go beyond and provide a program designed to meet the individual needs of the adult learner.

The key to the whole ABE process, the essential ingredient, is effective communication. In the search for factors that might allow ABE to become truly beneficial for the adult learner, it was determined that counseling is an integral part of the instruction, and the adult learner plays an important role in planning his own individual program of instruction. For change to take place, the ABE personnel must be able to understand, relate, and communicate with the adult learner. For this reason, personalized instruction in an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding is the central theme of the Columbus ABE program.

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TARGET POPULATION - HISTORICAL

The first Adult Basic Education program in the Columbus Public Schools was established during the Summer of 1965 as a pilot program for the State Department of Education. The program has expanded from that initial program when 80 adult learners were enrolled, to the current program serving over 1960 adults in the greater Columbus area who are ages 16 years or older, and need basic education skills. The range of academic skills within the target population extends from non-readers, who have attended very little if any formal educational program, to adults who are quite capable academically but have failed to complete an acceptable high school program due to a variety of personal, social, or psychological deficits. Although the program serves adults across the socio-economic strata, the nucleus of the participants are considered to be in the low to low-middle socio-economic levels, with an average yearly income of less than six thousand dollars. Out of 1,969 adults who enrolled in the 1973-74 individualized placement program, 512 read below the fourth grade level; 728 read between 4.1 through 6.5 grade level, and 729 read from 616 grade level and above. Within this group, 128 adults learned to read and write for the first time, while 163 passed the high school General Educational Development Test. As a result of individual advancement in reading skills, 115 received job promotions, 200 entered job training programs, and 156 received new jobs.

From the period 1967 through 1974, 720 adults enrolled in the ABE program have successfully completed the high school General Education Development Examination. Each year, approximately eighty-eight percent of the ABE students who take the test pass, compared to a success rate of approximately sixty percent throughout the state of Ohio.

STAFF AND LOCATION

The main program center is housed in a renovated building centrally located in downtown Columbus. Two individualized reading laboratories and one laboratory for mathematical instruction are contained in this center. Full-time staff serving this learning center include the program director, three teachers, a paraprofessional, a counselor, a community worker, and a secretary. In addition, twenty-three teachers, five counselors, and one paraprofessional serve an additional fourteen smaller centers located throughout Columbus proper. The smaller centers are also under the supervision of the program director, who is responsible for coordinating the total Adult Education Program.

The community worker role is considered an innovative approach to the use of skills acquired through training as a social worker. This professional's primary duties involve the areas of recruitment, retention, and community relations for the Adult Basic Education Program.

The counselor's role is essential because, from the initation of the Adult Basic Education Program in Columbus, the emphasis has been upon the establishment of a guidance-centered program for learning. It is the responsibility of the counselor to coordinate the program activities of each learning center, in addition to fulfilling the role responsibilities involving interviewing, counseling, and the prescribing of individual programs for adults.

PROGRAM

The impetus of the ABE program is to offer an instructional program that is designed to meet the individual needs of the adult learner.

Each adult brings a unique set of parameters to the program, and the goal of the total staff is to provide an instructional program that will accomodate as many adults

as possible. Initially, each new enrollee is interviewed by a counselor whose primary objective is to help each adult learner solidify his purposes for enrolling and to formulate a prescription for instruction. Factors such as work schedule, family responsibility, need for transportation, level of academic skills, plus a variety of personal conditions must be considered if the program is to be tailored to fit the individual. Enrollment is open-ended in that no restrictions are placed on length of enrollment, number of classes that must be attended, and etc. Ideally, if attendance should falter, the counselor and/or community worker would conduct a follow-up of the learner and attempt to assess the reasons for reduced attendance. The task of the instructor is to provide instruction at the adult learner's level. The teacher translates the learner's prescription into teaching strategies to assist the adult in attaining his stated goal. A folder on each enrollee is maintained from the first meeting with the instructor until the adult learner masters his goal or terminates his involvement with the program. This folder is always available to the student where he can see his progress being recorded. Materials must be adult-oriented requiring an innovative use of teacher-made materials as well as close scrutiny of commercially produced goods. Programmed tests and other teaching aids (e.g. reading pacers, language masters, and etc.) are an acceptable approach for the more advanced learners. Continual instructional aid or counseling in the areas of vocational, personal, or educational concerns is offered based on the needs of the individual.